

# The Outlook

Alabama Department of Mental Health Newsletter



## Raise Awareness with Every Mile You Drive!

**The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) is excited to introduce a new specialty license plate designed to spark conversations about mental health, unite communities, and support Alabamians on their journey through prevention, treatment, and recovery.**

Featuring a vibrant background and a tri-colored heart, the plate boldly displays the message Mental Health Matters, serving as a daily reminder that mental well-being is essential in every aspect of our lives.

Mental health affects us all. Whether it's a friend, family member, or colleague, we all know someone who is affected by mental health, substance use disorders, or disabilities. Unfortunately, many people don't know where to turn for help.

The Mental Health Matters license plate aims to change that by raising awareness and encouraging open conversations. By increasing visibility and access to information, we can help individuals, and their loved ones connect with vital support services and resources.

To preorder your plate, visit [mydmv.revenue.alabama.gov](https://mydmv.revenue.alabama.gov). Join ADMH, providers, and community partners in breaking the stigma surrounding mental illness, substance use disorders, and disabilities.

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## Want to be included in the next issue?

Send us your stories, achievements and events!

[publicinformation.dmh@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:publicinformation.dmh@mh.alabama.gov)

334-242-3417

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HONORING  
PIONEERS AND  
ADVOCATES IN  
MENTAL HEALTH,  
SUBSTANCE USE,  
AND DISABILITY  
EFFORTS AND  
ADVANCEMENTS



From L to R: Claudia Gordon, Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller, Dr. Jeanne Spurlock, Dr. Chester Pierce, Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark and Dr. Kenneth Bancroft Clark, Dr. Nathie Marbury, and Betty Williams.

## Black History Month

Black History Month, observed every February, is a time to honor the rich history, achievements, and contributions of Black individuals throughout the United States. Originally established as a week-long observance, it later expanded into a month-long celebration, providing an opportunity to reflect on pivotal moments in history and recognize the trailblazers who have shaped our society.

# The Office of Self-Advocacy

The Office of Self-Advocacy at the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) empowers individuals with developmental disabilities to speak up, make decisions, and shape their communities. One of its key initiatives is The Advocator newsletter, which shares self-advocate stories, important resources, and updates on advocacy efforts across Alabama.

By providing information and amplifying voices, the newsletter helps individuals stay informed and engaged. The Office of Self-Advocacy works to ensure that everyone has the tools and confidence to advocate for themselves and others.

Check out the latest issue here! <https://mh.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/The-Advocator-Jan2025.pdf>



## Autism Acceptance Month: Celebrating Differences

[Autism Acceptance Month](#) is dedicated to fostering understanding and respect for individuals of all abilities and backgrounds. Observed annually in March, it encourages open conversations, challenges misconceptions, and promotes acceptance in everyday life.

Through community events, storytelling, and advocacy, this month highlights the importance of recognizing and appreciating differences. It's a reminder that everyone deserves respect, dignity, and the opportunity to thrive.

By embracing acceptance, we create a stronger, more supportive community. To learn about state autism services, visit <https://mh.alabama.gov/autism-services/>.



# THE ADVOCATOR

Vol 3, Issue 2

### EXCITING NEWS!

The Self-Advocacy Advisory Council has been finalized. We are thrilled to announce the members who will be instrumental in guiding our initiatives and ensuring that the voices of self-advocates are heard. The council is composed of a diverse group of individuals with lived experience, bringing a wealth of knowledge and passion to the table. Their expertise will be invaluable as we work towards creating a more inclusive and accessible society for all.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

The Self-Advocacy Advisory Council will be meeting regularly to discuss key issues affecting self-advocates and to develop recommendations for policy and program changes. They will also be actively involved in outreach and education efforts to raise awareness about self-advocacy and empower individuals to speak up for themselves.

### GET INVOLVED!

We believe that everyone has a role to play in promoting self-advocacy. Here are some ways you can get involved:

- **Stay Informed:** Sign up for our newsletter to stay up-to-date on the latest news and events.
- **Attend Our Events:** We will be hosting a series of events and workshops throughout the year. These events are a great opportunity to learn more about self-advocacy and connect with other self-advocates.
- **Share Your Story:** Your story is powerful. By sharing your experiences, you can help to raise awareness and inspire others.
- **Become a Member:** If you are passionate about self-advocacy, we encourage you to become a member of our organization. As a member, you will have the opportunity to participate in our advocacy efforts and help to shape the future of our movement.

### REMEMBER, YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

We believe that everyone has the right to self-advocacy. We are committed to empowering individuals to speak up for themselves and to create a world where everyone's voice is heard.

### CONTACT US:

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the advisory council, please contact us at [niles.valentine@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:niles.valentine@mh.alabama.gov) or call the Office of Self-Advocacy at 334-353-7032.

### TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Inaugural Meeting, November 15th, 2024 from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

# Success Story: Terry, Individual served through The Arc of Madison County's Community Experience and Support Group (CESG) program

**Terry's commitment to learning and service shines through in every adventure he takes on.**

Terry is a joyful, kind-hearted, and thoughtful person who brings positivity wherever he goes. A fun

fact about Terry is that he's a huge fan of the Harlem Globetrotters and can't wait to see them again!

In August 2024, the Opportunity Center co-hosted a Community Safety Class with the Huntsville

Police Department at the new Huntsville Police Academy. During the event, Terry participated by answering questions, talking about vehicle safety, and helping his friends understand the importance of community safety overall. Topics included how to communicate effectively with Law Enforcement, how to ask for help, appropriate situations in which to call 911, how to react safely after a motor vehicle accident, the importance of a seat belt, how to respond while in the community to natural disasters like fires or severe weather and how to stay as safe as possible in an active shooter situation.



## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Every March, we celebrate [Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month](#) (DDAM) to promote understanding and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. This month is dedicated to fostering a more understanding society and ensuring that every individual, regardless of ability, has the chance to lead a fulfilling life.

By raising awareness and championing change, we can help build a more accessible and supportive world for all. To learn more about DDAM: <https://nacdd.org/ddam1/>. To learn about DD services offered in the state, click <https://mh.alabama.gov/division-of-developmental-disabilities/>.



**1-800-367-0955**

Kathy Sawyer



CELEBRATING  
ADVOCACY AND  
INSPIRING  
ALABAMIANS



BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH

Kathy Sawyer became the first Black commissioner for the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) in 1999. She guided the Department until 2005 and played a pivotal role in closing the Wyatt v. Stickney case. She has dedicated her life to improving mental health care and disability advocacy.




## Improving Crisis Response: The CIT Newsletter

Did You Know? The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Newsletter, published by NAMI Alabama, shares updates, resources, and success stories about mental health crisis response across the state. CIT programs bring together law enforcement, mental health professionals, and community partners to ensure individuals in crisis receive the care they need.


The newsletter highlights training opportunities, advocacy efforts, and real-life examples of how CIT programs are making a difference.

Read the latest issue today!  
[namialabama.org/cit/newsletter](http://namialabama.org/cit/newsletter)

# Event:



REGISTER USING QR CODE:




## UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA IN YOUNG CHILDREN

MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US FOR THIS FREE VIRTUAL TRAINING OPEN TO ALL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVING PROFESSIONALS.

**MARCH 6, 2025**  
10:00AM - 12:00 NOON

NBCC CONTACT HOURS AVAILABLE.

PRESENTED BY:  
**TYESHA DURR, LPC, IMH-E®**  
STATE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE COORDINATOR



THIS TRAINING IS FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE "PROMOTE POSITIVE FAMILY EXPERIENCES & RELATIONSHIPS IN ALABAMA: A TEAM-BASED APPROACH" AND IS SUPPORTED BY GRANT NUMBER 81753W068420 FROM SAMHSA. ITS CONTENTS ARE SOLELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE OFFICIAL VIEWS OF SAMHSA.

Understanding Trauma in Young Children will be taught in person at Childcare Resources in Birmingham, AL on Wednesday, February 19 from 11am-12:30pm. Registration Link: [https://www.ccr-bhm.org/files/ugd/815377\\_a4f8dccc4f4b44edbf430206581b3462.pdf](https://www.ccr-bhm.org/files/ugd/815377_a4f8dccc4f4b44edbf430206581b3462.pdf)

Understanding Trauma in Young Children will be taught virtually by Tyesha Durr on Thursday, March 6th from 10am – 12:00pm. NBCC Contact Hours will be offered. Registration link: <https://forms.office.com/g/R7bCqLcfBn>.



## Condolences

We regret to inform you that Jeffery Chad Collins, ADMH, Registered Nurse II, passed away on Monday, February 03, 2025. Chad was a dedicated and respected employee at Bryce Hospital. Chad's presence in the lives of his family, coworkers and friends will forever be cherished and remembered.

Grief Counseling for ADMH staff remains available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), managed by Behavioral Health Systems, Inc. (BHS). Staff can directly contact BHS at 800-245-1150 or 205-879-1150.

Link to Obituary:  
[Mr. Chad Collins Obituary February 3, 2025 - Northport Funeral & Cremation Service](#)



## Preview: Capitol Showcase Art Exhibition

The Capitol Showcase Art Exhibition, hosted each May by the Alabama Department of Mental Health, highlights artwork created by individuals with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities. Held at the Alabama State Capitol, this event gives artists a chance to share their talents, express themselves, and show their creativity and their journey with their mental health.

The exhibition features a variety of art styles and encourages open conversations about mental health and recovery.

Learn more: [mh.alabama.gov/capitol-showcase](https://mh.alabama.gov/capitol-showcase)





## The AIR Conference: Empowering Peer Specialists and Advocates

The Alabama Institute for Recovery (A.I.R.) Conference is a key event for peer specialists, mental health advocates, and individuals passionate about recovery. Hosted by Wings Across Alabama and the Alabama Department of Mental Health, it offers workshops, keynote speakers, and networking opportunities focused on peer support, self-advocacy, and mental health inclusion.

The conference highlights the power of lived experience, equipping attendees with skills to support others in recovery. With a strong focus on education and connection, the AIR Conference continues to be a valuable space for those dedicated to mental health advocacy and peer support.

Register today! Click, [here](#).



# STOP JUDGING, START HEALING SUMMITS



**February 18-26, 2025**  
in Mobile, Birmingham,  
Huntsville, Prattville, and Dothan

• Address Stigma • Dispel Myths • Raise Awareness



**Serve.**  
**Empower.**  
**Support.**

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